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FOR FRC LAMBERT
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SUBJECT: VENEZUELA: 2005 COUNTRY REPORTS ON TERRORISM

REF: A. 04 CARACAS 3924

[B](#). STATE 193439

[1](#)1. (SBU) Post's POC is Political Officer Charles Ridley: TEL 58-212-907-8052, FAX 58-212-907-8033, EMAIL RidleyCL@state.gov. In April 2006 POC will be Political Officer Adam Center, EMAIL CenterAM@state.gov

GENERAL ASSESSMENT

[1](#)2. (U) Venezuelan cooperation in the international campaign against terrorism continued to be negligible in 2005. Public recriminations against U.S. counterterrorism policies by President Hugo Chavez and his close supporters persist; indeed, President Chavez publicly champions the cause of Iraqi insurgents. Such statements overshadow and detract from the extremely limited cooperation that exists between specialists and technicians of the two nations.

[1](#)3. (U) Valid Venezuelan citizenship, identity, or travel documents can be easily obtained, making Venezuela a potentially attractive destination-or way station en route to the United States-for terrorists. For example, senior Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) member Rodrigo Granda, whose December 2004 capture in Caracas was allegedly orchestrated by Colombian officials, had been naturalized as a Venezuelan citizen and had a Venezuelan identification card. Granda also attended an ideological conference in Venezuela in December 2004 along with Venezuelan government personnel, according to press reports. A FARC communique claimed that Granda was in Venezuela at the request of the Venezuelan Government.

[1](#)4. (U) President Chavez' stated ideological affinity with Colombian terrorist organizations designated by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act-the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN)-limits Venezuelan cooperation with Colombia in combating terrorism. The FARC and the ELN, which the Government of Venezuela does not recognize as terrorist organizations, often use the area for cross-border incursions and regard Venezuelan territory near the border as a safe haven. In addition, splinter groups of the FARC and another designated organization, the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), operate in various parts of Venezuela and are involved in narcotics trafficking.

[1](#)5. (U) It is unclear to what extent the Government of Venezuela condones or administers material support to Colombian terrorists and at what level. An ex-ELN guerrilla told the press in February 2005 that a "non-aggression" pact existed between the ELN and Venezuelan authorities and added that the Venezuelan National Guard allowed the terrorist group to kidnap ranchers. Weapons and ammunition-some from official Venezuelan stocks and facilities-continue to go from Venezuelan suppliers into the hands of Colombian terrorist organizations, although it is not clear that such diversion results from Venezuelan government policy. In any case, Venezuela is unable and unwilling to systematically police the 1,400-mile Venezuela-Colombia border. Venezuelan security officials appear to be aware of the location of terrorist encampments in Venezuela, as the press has reported on the general vicinities of many of these. Efforts by Venezuelan security forces to interdict arms flows to these groups are also ineffective.

[1](#)6. (U) Venezuela is a party to six of the 12 international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism. Venezuela has signed and ratified the UN Convention on Terrorist Bombings of 1997, the UN Convention on Terrorism Financing of 1999, and the OAS Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism of 2002. Venezuela's organized crime bill and penal code reform bill, both passed in 2005, outline punishments for collaborating with terrorists. The laws, however, do not define the terms "terrorist" or "terrorism." If passed, an anti-terrorism bill proposed in 2001 would define terrorist activities more specifically, although the law could also undercut political freedoms. In November 2004, the Supreme Court's Judicial Committee designated a group of judges to

decide all terrorism cases and review decisions in terrorism investigations. It remains uncertain whether the Supreme Court designees and the current and proposed laws are directed at curbing terrorism or President Chavez' opponents.

17. (U) Unidentified groups attempting to influence the tenuous domestic political situation employed terrorist tactics throughout 2005, particularly in Caracas. A series of small bombs and threats were variously blamed on President Chavez' supporters or on his political opponents. The Venezuelan Government continued to allege in 2005 that exile groups, the U.S. Government, and President Bush sought to overthrow President Chavez and kill him, but it offered no proof. As recently as late December 2005, the Venezuelan Government claimed such groups were trying to sabotage Venezuela's December 4, 2005 legislative elections. Venezuelan authorities claimed in May 2004 that they had captured some 100 Colombian paramilitaries training secretly near Caracas, although it is unclear whether any of the detained were members of the AUC. While most were eventually released, 27 of the Colombians and three Venezuelan military officers were sentenced to varying prison terms on October 25, 2005.

18. (U) Within an Arab and South Asian immigrant population of about 250,000, there are small groups of Shia and Sunni radicals in Venezuela. At a minimum, the Sunni radicals are sympathetic to the global jihad, especially that waged by Palestinian groups. There were indications of monetary support for Middle Eastern terrorist groups coming from Islamic groups in several Venezuelan urban centers. As the Venezuelan Government's budding relationship with Iran develops, small but well organized Venezuelan Shia groups, including those affiliated with Lebanese Hizballah, may adhere more closely to an Iranian conception of a global struggle against Western interests. For its part, the Venezuelan Government makes little effort to cooperate with the United States in the Global War on Terror.

BROWNFIELD